1: Conzemius M-4, 5 (1921) 1932
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132 coast. The rainfall is enormous, especially at San Juan del Norte or Greytown. According to the records of the Nicaragua Canal Co. over 296 inches fell at the latter place in 1890, which makes it perhaps the wettest area in America.

The northeast trade winds, which prevail on the Mosquito Coast, become saturated with moisture as they pass over the Caribbean Sea, which is precipitated as they meet the ranges of hills in the interior. Rarely does it rain, however, the whole day long; heavy showers, accompanied by violent winds, pour down enormous quantities of rain, after which the sun makes its appearance again. During the rainy season entire days may pass without a single drop of rain, while, on the other hand, light showers are frequent during the so-called dry season.

Roughly speaking, north of Rio Patuca the *verano* "summer," or dry season, lasts from the middle of February to the middle of May, and again from the beginning of August to the end of September. The remainder of the year is known as *invierno* "winter," or rainy season. The wettest and most disagreeable month of the year is October. The heavy rains pouring down during this month are known as *chubascos* among the Ladinos; they correspond to the *temporales* of the interior and to the *tapayagües* of the immediate Pacific coast.

South of Rio Patuca the rainy season lasts from May to January, with occasional spells of fair weather in September and sometimes also in October. The heaviest rains occur in June and July and are accompanied by thunder and lightning. These thunderstorms disappear as quickly as they come and give way to bright sunshine. April is the driest month of the year, but it is never free from numerous light showers.

137 VEGETABLE KINGDOM.—The difference in the rainfall between the two coasts of Central America is manifested in the contrasting aspect of the forests. Under the stimulating influence of the moist climate, which reigns practically throughout the year, the Mosquito Coast maintains an exuberant growth of vegetation and the forests never lose their brilliant evergreen foliage. On the Pacific slope, however, where long periods of drought check vegetative vigor, the forests present during the dry season an autumnal appearance, relieved by green stripes along the rivers. In the latter region may be observed the curious habit, possessed by several unrelated species, of producing flowers and fruits while the tree is entirely leafless.

Immediately along the seashore the soil is sandy and there is little vegetation, but it is partly fitted for pastures owing to the annual overflow of the rivers. Beyond this coastal region extends a strip of swampy land, about 15 to 20 miles wide, which is largely unfit for cultivation and is covered with a dense and impenetrable thicket of

1: Conzemius M-4, 5 (1921) 1932
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mangroves, reeds, and coarse grasses. Then follows the real tropical forest with very fertile soil, consisting on the surface of vegetable humus. In order to penetrate the forest the hunter has to cut his way through the tangled mass of vines and epiphytes with the aid of his machete. 137

North of Rio Patuca the fertile areas are characterized by the existence of extensive "cohune ridges," that is, places dotted with the cohune or corozo palm (*Attalea* sp.). A great number of other palms are found in this region, but only two of them are cultivated and play an important part in the food supply, the coco palm and the pejivalle. Among the other tree forms characteristic of the forest may be mentioned the following: Ceiba (*Ceiba pentandra* Gaertn.), mahogany (*Swietenia macrophylla* King), Spanish or West Indian cedar (*Cedrela* sp.), rosewood, rubber tree (*Castilla* sp.), sapodilla (*Sapota zapotilla*), lignum vitae or guayacán (*Tecoma* sp.), Santa Maria or calaba (*Calophyllum brasiliense* var.), and balsa or corkwood (*Ochroma lagopus*). Epiphytic orchids are especially numerous and rare varieties are also found. The strong withes or *bejucos* on the trees are used in basketry and as a tying material. [285]

From Rio Tinto to Rio Grande the dense forest is at times interrupted by large areas of pine ridges or savannas. These are undulating plains covered with gravel or coarse sand, overgrown with grass, myrtaceae, oaks, nances, small fan palms and long leaf or pitch pines. This pine (*Pinus tenuifolia* Benth.) has its southern limit on the Atlantic side of Nicaragua, a little north of Bluefields Bluff, in latitude 12° 5′ north. Few big trees are to be found in these savannas; there is little underbrush, epiphytes and lianas are scarce, and the whole presents a parklike appearance. On the rich alluvial soil on both sides of the streams traversing the savannas grows a dense and luxuriant vegetation resembling the real forest.

ANIMAL KINGDOM.—Zoologically the Mosquito Coast belongs to South America rather than to North America. In this sparsely inhabited region may be found a great number of species of animal life. The largest mammals are the tapir and the manatee; the latter is still an important animal of food for the Indians, but it is getting rare now. 136

In the jungle are found such beasts of prey as the jaguar, the puma or cougar, and the ocelot; a black variety of the jaguar is occasionally met with. The howling monkey, the spider monkey, and the white-faced or capuchin monkey are found on the tree tops; the two last-named ones are, together with two species of deer and two species of peccary, the most important food animals of the Indians. [224]

Three species of anteaters, many armadillos and opossums, and 2-toed and 3-toed sloths may be met with. Among the rodents may be mentioned the agouti, paca, several species of porcupine, squirrels,

2: Kirchhoff E.-4 (no date) 1948

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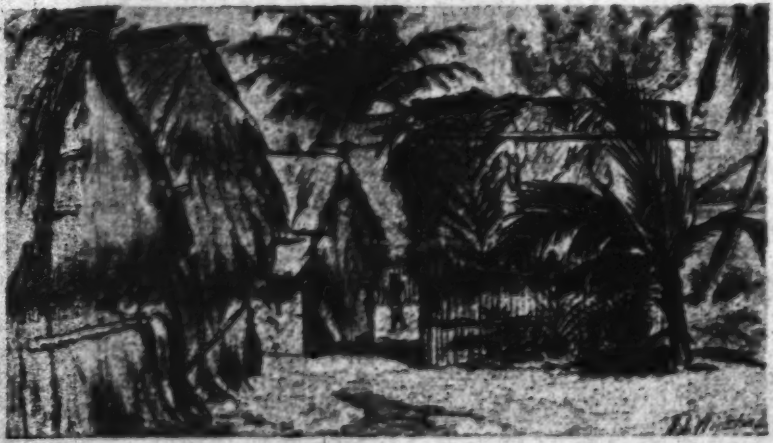

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PLATE 35.—Sumo and Mosquito Indians, Nicaragua. *Top: Sumo man. Bottom: Mosquito village, Pearl Lagoon.* (Courtesy American Museum of Natural History.)

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